

# Reflections

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## Lent Death and Life

Many Lenten texts invite us to see death face to face. I think that at one time or another, we have all had to mourn the death of a relative or a friend. There are probably few among us who have not seen a deceased person or who have not prayed at the bedside of a deceased person.

When a loved one dies, perhaps we are tempted to ask God to bring them back to life. If we continue with this thought, we will soon find out that this petition has been made somewhat blindly. It is not about our deceased ones returning to earthly life.

For example, the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11, 1-45) is not the resurrection which has been promised to all of us. It is not a satisfactory resurrection since it is not definite and does not change the human condition in anything. Lazarus came out of his tomb alive, but sooner or later he had to return to it.

Christ did not perform this miracle to confuse the natural laws or to abolish death in this world. The miracle is a sign, it is a form of teaching. It is the revelation of a lasting truth through a passing fact. Whoever holds fast to such a wonder, closes his/her eyes to its meaning. Whoever wants to force a miracle is interested in himself/herself and not in God.

What is the message of this miracle? By means of the resurrection of Lazarus, Christ wants to teach us that He is the Lord; He is the Owner of Life and those who place themselves into His hands will live.

Between Martha and Mary: Martha believes in the universal resurrection but ignores that the Resurrection is at her side. This is the great Christian revelation: *“I am the Resurrection and the Life: whoever believes in me, even though he dies, will live.”*

In this way, Jesus teaches the existence of another life of which He Himself is the origin and the key. He tells us that He Himself has power over life and death and that for those who believe in Him, death is like a dream – to awaken is to resurrect for the true life.

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit to bring back to life that which was dead. The same Living Spirit resurrects Jesus from among the dead. With Christ, He resurrects all who believe in Him.

St. Paul teaches that the Christian is a man who has received the Spirit and with Him life. This Spirit of God will also give new life to our bodies and will do away with the natural fear of death.

A natural law exists: man must die, but there is also a supernatural law which does not contradict the natural law. Instead it completes it: the death of man is a birth. *“If the grain of wheat which falls to earth does not die, it will be alone, but if it dies, it produces much fruit”* (Jn 12, 24).

Therefore, thinking of our deceased, we all know that they are not truly dead: we know that their souls live, think, love and see us; we also know that their bodies will live again some day, transformed.

Above all, we know that a God who resurrects the dead lives. He is a God who has conquered death. He is a God who at each Mass, in each of our communions, introduces into our souls a leaven of immortality.

Dear brothers and sisters, the mentioned example of the resurrection of Lazarus is like an anticipation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. Hopefully, may it also be an anticipation of our own resurrection at the end of our life: the culmination of an authentic Christian life, a life which He has prepared for us and has made it ready for that most decisive moment.....

May the Virgin Mary accompany us and strengthen us on our journey toward the final victory.

### Questions for reflection

1. Do I avoid speaking of death?
2. Is eternal life a reality for me?
3. How do I remember my deceased family members?

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